

## GREAT BRITAIN'S BURDEN IN PALESTINE

By Dr. Max Nordau (Copyright, 1920, by Jewish Correspondence Bureau)

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Weblink> <https://www.nli.org.il/en/newspapers/cgs/1920/07/09/01/article/26/?srpos=14&e=-----en-20--1--img-txIN%7ctxTI-moslim-----English-----1>

There are public men in England who look with misgivings at the Mandate over Palestine which England has accepted from the hands of the League of Nations. Responsible newspapers have taken up the subject and some of them are not far from making a bugbear of it, by giving a gloomy picture of the complications which might arise through Zionist activities in Palestine, and of the dangers that threaten the British policy in the Near and Middle East on the score. Happily, these cries of alarm do not seem, so far, to have impressed the Government. Nevertheless, it is perhaps not superfluous to examine if there is a reason for uneasiness from the point of view of British imperial policy and its permanent interests.

Before the war, the statesmen at the helm of the Empire Vessel had a very hard task indeed in steering clear of the cliffs and shoals which beset their road through the waters of the near and farther East. There was the decaying Ottoman Empire, incapable of anything good and useful, but still strong enough to work mischief, which since the revolution of 1907 and the coming into power of the Young Turks tried to gain new strength by means of a pan-Turkish nationalist agitation molded on the best models of Pan Slavism and Pan Germanism. Turkey held still nominal rule over Egypt and was in a position to create their constant difficulties to England, to whom the unhindered control of the Suez Canal was, and is, of vital importance. Behind Turkey there was Germany which was the real master at Constantinople and by means of the Bagdad railway system began to lay its heavy hands on Mesopotamia and Arabia as well. In Teheran England was faced with deep digging German and Russian intrigues which were strenuously antagonistic to each other, but united in their determination of ousting English influence from Persia. In Central Asia Russia prepared in slow, but incessant work its advance towards the frontiers of India and neither the disaster of the war with Japan nor the new tendency of a friendly understanding between London and the then Sanct Petersburg put a stop to the perfidies of a secret diplomacy which tried hard to enlist Afghanistan, Turkestan, and even Kashmir in the ranks of the hosts drilled for a future assault on the British power in India. The momentous encounter, half a century ago, of Younghusband and Prjevalsky in Central Asia was a dismal symbol foreshadowing a later fatal shock in the same regions between the two world powers represented by those two hardy travellers.

The triumph of the Allies in the world war has radically modified this situation to the immense advantage of Great Britain. The Ottoman Empire is a thing of the past, it is expelled from Egypt and all the Arab countries, and in spite of some turbulent movements in Anatolia has ceased to be a danger to peace and order in near Asia. Germany is out of the field, it can no longer stretch out its tentacles along the Bagdad line down to the shore of the Persian Gulf where its outposts had begun to survey, across the sea, the opposite coast of India. Soviet Russia continues to be a

sinister threat, but not to Great Britain alone, to all states and societies of civilized mankind; and not by its military and naval power, but by its propaganda which is not limited to Asia. Among the Arabs, liberated by the Allies, and principally by England, from the Turkish yoke which has enslaved and crushed them for almost five centuries, new tendencies manifest themselves which certainly will have to be closely watched. They pretend to gather all Arabic speaking populations into one state stretching from the northernmost limits of Syria all along the east and south coast of the Mediterranean right up to the columns of Hercules, comprising, besides Syria with the Lebanon and Palestine, Mesopotamia and Arabia, Egypt, Tripoli with the Cyrenaica, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco right down to the Sudan, claiming perhaps even Malta, and trying to win a backing among the 60 million of Moslim in India. This seems rather alarming but happily it is not, or at least not yet, as grave as it looks. The pan-Arabic idea is at present professed by a small number of intellectuals only who have lived in Europe or had access to European sources, and the masses are not yet converted to it. However, it shall not be denied that it is flattering formulas, insistently, ardently, fanatically repeated by eloquent demagogues, penetrate easily into untutored minds and take possession of them, particularly when fostered by improvident and light-hearted European politicians who flatter themselves that it will always be easy for them to control the movement and make it subservient to their own special interests.

It is a truism to state that Great Britain is laden with heavy burden in Asia. This is nothing new. This is the state of things since England has set her foot on India, developed her rule there, extended it to the boundaries of Afghanistan englobed Burma, and made of that immense part of the Asiatic Continent the strongest column of her world Empire. **For us Jews, the important question is: does the English acceptance of the Mandate over Palestine and the preparation of this country for its destiny of becoming the National home for the Jewish people add to England's burden and make it heavier?**

A moment's reflection suffices to convince an impartial judge of the contrary. What would Great Britain's position in Near Asia be if it had not accepted the Mandate with a view of allowing us to establish our National Home in Palestine? England has by glorious fighting, aided in a certain measure by allied and Jewish forces, conquered Palestine from Turkey. But the British Empire will not simply annex and obtain this prize of its victory, as the allied powers have solemnly declared that they would not wage war for conquest's sake. Neither can it abandon the country which would immediately become the bone of contention between France claiming it on the strength of traditional influence exercised for centuries, and the new Arab Kingdom proclaimed recently at Damascus and pretending to imply, with Syria, the whole Palestine and Mesopotamia. It would obviously be most imprudent for England to construct with her own hands a solid bridge between the Egyptian nationalists whose program is disloyalty to the British protector, and the newfangled Arabo-Syrian imperialism which would be bound to become rapidly a danger to the security of the Suez Canal, to the communication with India, and to India itself. At this point Zionism comes in, offering itself as the only reasonable and safe way out from a very awkward dilemma. This is so clear that British statesmen might well repeat with regard to Zionism the words uttered by diplomats a century ago with regard to Austria: If it did not exist, it would have to be invented. It is possible that someday highly perfected Super-Zeppelins in great numbers, capable of sailing rapidly straight from England to India, without landing on the road, carrying heavy loads, will render superfluous all other means and methods of communication by sea and by land. Till then, however, England is compelled to keep

up an efficient watch on the Suez Canal. Here is Great Britain's burden in the near East, and it is in no way a consequence of Zionism or connected with it. If the British taxpayer objects to this burden, there is only one alternative for him he must insist upon the Government withdrawing its forces from the Suez Canal and giving up Egypt and very soon afterwards India, making room for rivals who would with enthusiasm undertake the responsibilities which the British taxpayer would have found too costly for him. If England is determined to retain India, she must as a logical consequence maintain her position in Egypt and all the intervening territories essential for the keeping open (if the road to India But this is much more difficult when England watches on the Suez Canal, with an unreliable Egypt in its back, has to face a huge Arab realm inhabited and swayed by a united Arab nation of perhaps 30 or 35 million seeking to establish political links with India, than when it is aided in its arduous and dangerous task by an absolutely trusty friend and ally who is not only ready, but eager to take his share, the greatest share, in the defense of the British position at the point of contact of Africa and Asia against virtual and actual enemies of England's world Empire. We wish nothing better than to be this friend and ally and to load our own shoulders with the heaviest part of the burden represented by the Mandate over Palestine. But in order to be able to sustain its weight, we must be strong and unhampered in our movements. The appointment of the Right Honorable Herbert Samuel as High Commissioner for Palestine and the announced decision of introducing civil administration in the country are proofs that the British government has at last broken with the deplorable method embodied in General Bols of Jerusalem pogrom and Jabotinsky sentence memory. But the supreme authority must avoid hesitations, tergiversations and half-heartedness, must have clear views and be consequent if its welcome and promising new attitude is to produce the full effect that may be confidently expected of it. The Jewish people must be convinced from the outset that the immense effort which it is prepared to make for the development of Palestine will have for its ultimate aim and outcome the organization of a solid, viable, indisputably Jewish state in the land of its fathers. Not the slightest doubt must be allowed to persist as to this result bringing foreseen and discounted with favor by the British government. Such doubt would naturally, necessarily dishearten the Jewish people and paralyze its energy. We want to work with the utmost tension of our force for the building up of a strong Jewish state in provisionally British protected Palestine which is to act as a strong and sure sentinel at the Suez Canal. We will not be able to assume this function if the authorities flirt with the Arabs in Palestine and pretend defend them against wrongs which no Jew in his senses thinks and has ever thought of causing them. We want no privileges; we only want justice. We are anxious to go in such numbers to Palestine as to form there the majority of the inhabitants without displacing one single present dweller of the soil. Once being the majority, we shall be entitled to claim the natural rights of a majority and there will be no room for reasonable complaints, objections or protests against our exercising equitably, thoughtfully, with moderation and measure, the lawful attributions of a majority.

It must be made clear to the British taxpayer that the one sure means of relieving Great Britain of her burden in Palestine is to cease at once impeding Jewish mass immigration in the country and to allow us elbow room there. If we are permitted to organize a Jewish militia who is earning its life with its handiwork, but is drilled and armed and ready at the first call to draw up to the defense of the country, if Palestine is at once granted the right of establishing its budget and of paying its way by the normal means of taxation and state loans, Palestine need not cost the British taxpayer one penny, and the burden of Great Britain at that point will become featherlight.

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[https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/martinkramer/files/forgotten\\_truth\\_balfour\\_declaration.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/martinkramer/files/forgotten_truth_balfour_declaration.pdf)

<https://mosaicmagazine.com/essay/israel-zionism/2021/01/the-mystery-of-theodor-herzl/>

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